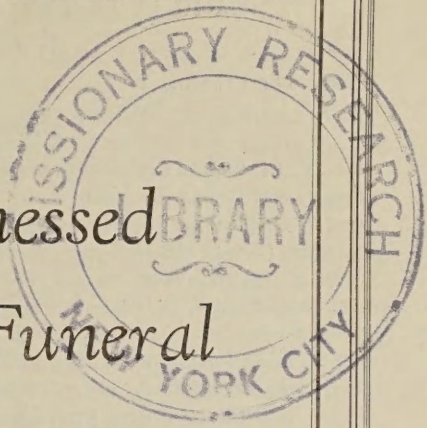


1711



He Witnessed His Own Funeral

A Play in Two Acts and an Epilogue

By Emil W. Menzel

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He Witnessed His Own Funeral

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS AND AN EPILOGUE

By Emil W. Menzel

Time: The Present

Place: In Central Provinces, India

Dramatis Personae

Rev. Y. Prakash (Prah-kahsh).....An Indian Missionary
Rev. I. N. Sticks.....An American Missionary
Mrs. I. N. Sticks.....His Wife
Sitaram (See-ta-ram).....Son of an Indian village owner
Sitaram's father.....Village owner
Sitaram's Mother
Sushila (Soo-she-la).....Sitaram's wife
Daniel and Massihdas (Mah-see-dahs).....Christian workers
Dayalu (Dye-ya-loo).....A servant
First, second, and third, and rich villagers
Mohan.....A ten year old boy
Villagers, and boys and girls of the Sakti Orphanage

Act I. On the edge of a village in Raigarh State. In the cool season.

Act II. Sitting room in the home of Rev. I. N. Sticks in Sakti. In the rainy season.

Epilogue: Same as Act 2.

Note: This play is based on actual occurrences in Raigarh State under Rev. Y. Prakash who is still working in this field. The original setting has been retained as far as possible. The names of the characters, with the exception of that of Rev. Prakash, have been changed for obvious reasons.

Playing Notes

It is possible to play Act I by itself. It is a complete play in itself. Do not be frightened at the large number of characters in the play. There are only ten characters with speaking parts of any length, and the large number of villagers need not attend rehearsal until the principal characters know their parts well. By no means should the villagers attend the rehearsals before that time. Dayalu can double up the part of one of the villagers. Some of the orphanage boys and girls can also be villagers.

Also do not become frightened at the seeming elaborateness of the costuming. Mr. and Mrs. Sticks wear ordinary clothes; so does Rev. Y. Prakash, who dresses quite European. Dayalu can wear pajama pants with an ordinary shirt over it (shirt sticking out all around) and a turban. Cheese cloth will take care of the rest of the costuming. Get pictures of Indian men and women from the library. There have been many pictures published in our Synodical papers which will give an idea how to drape. Christian and Hindu women dress practically alike. Christian men often wear pajama trousers like Dayalu, but Hindu men never do. So the draping cloth style and not the pajama style should be copied for the village men. Cloth can be of many gaudy colors. Jewelry of all kinds is in place. Sitaram and his father should be dressed more richly than the rest and wear more jewelry.

Should it be difficult to secure enough men to play the parts there is no reason why the parts of Dayalu, Sitaram, Daniel, Massihdas and any of the villagers cannot be played by women or girls dressed as men.

Act I requires very little scenery. Even a perfectly empty stage will do. A painted mud hut as background will add much, as also a few palms. Look at pictures for ideas. The main thing is the costuming. That will give the proper atmosphere. Act II calls for no particular comment except to call to mind that Sakti is quite in the backwoods.

For further information, photos of people, scenes, costumes, etc., address the Board of Foreign Missions, 2951 Tilden St., Washington, D. C.

It would be well if all the Indian characters' faces and hands could be given a brown color. Do not use burnt cork as Indians are not Negroes.

ACT I

Scene: An open place on the edge of an Indian village. There may be a box or two draped as rocks for some of the characters to sit on. No one is on the stage as the curtain opens, but soon women pass across the stage with bundles of wood on their heads, accompanied by a child or two. Two villagers engaged in conversation pass from the opposite side. A man passes, carrying a "cower" on his shoulders containing a bundle wrapped in cloth on both sides. (A cower is a simple apparatus for carrying luggage. It consists of a straight stick carried horizontally on the shoulders to both ends of which are tied ropes about 2½ feet long holding the bundles or baskets to be carried. A cower looks just about like an old fashioned balance scale balanced on a man's shoulders instead of a balance pole. The man walks balancing the cower on his shoulders.) A better dressed villager carrying an open umbrella may also pass by. After these passing people have given the Indian village atmosphere, Rev. Sticks and Rev. Prakash enter. They are dressed in khaki or white trousers and are hiking. Unless you can imitate a tropical sun helmet it is best to let them appear bareheaded as they would not be wearing any other type of hat. They carry water canteens but nothing else.

REV. S: Here's a little shade. Let's take a rest. (They both sit down on the ground or on a rock, and take a drink from their water canteens.)

REV. P: It's about time. We've come eight miles without a stop.

REV. S. (chuckling): That won't hurt you. You know it takes a lot to thaw out the bones of you Indians once the temperature drops below eighty.

REV. P: Wait until the hot season comes again. Then your bones will be as thawed out as an oyster's.

REV. S: This shade isn't so bad at that. It may be midwinter but when you're hiking the sun gets pretty warm.

REV. P: You can have your chilly old shade. I am going to sit in the sunshine where it is comfortable. (Moves over a little out of the shade.)

REV. S. (looking around): In the winter time India is the most glorious country in all the world. Just like a perfect day in May and June at home. And every day is a perfect day for a picnic.

REV. P: I like it a little warmer for mine, especially in the touring season.

REV. S: For me it is exactly right, just the same tempertaure it's going to be in Heaven. By the way, what village is this?

REV. P: I will ask.

(In the meantime several villagers have come and at first stand shyly around. Gradually they come nearer and some seat themselves on the ground near the missionary and Rev. Prakash.)

REV. P. (to villagers): What village is this?

VILLAGERS: Bagauth.

A VILLAGER: Who are you?

REV. S: We are the missionaries.

(Immediately a villager steps up from the rear and holds up his right hand almost in front of the face of the missionary.)

REV. S: I wonder what this fellow thinks he's doing, sticking his fist right in front of my face! Does he want to fight?

REV. P. (laughing): Oh, he heard you are a missionary and wants you to feel his pulse. He is probably sick. They think you can tell all things by feeling the pulse.

REV. S: Well, brother what's your trouble? (Gets up and feels pulse.)

SICK VILLAGER: My stomach hurts.

REV. S. (to Rev. P.): Am I supposed to tell what is wrong with his stomach by feeling his pulse? I wonder if the pulse won't tell me the condition of his adenoids also.

REV. P. (to sick villager): What have you been doing to cure your stomachache?

SICK VILLAGER: I drink a mixture of the five products of the cow every day.

REV. S: And what are the five products of the cow?

SICK VILLAGER: Milk, curd, butter, dung and water.

REV. S: He's lucky his stomach aches. If it didn't it would be sure proof the stomach is dead.

REV. P: This fellow has had dysentery for two months his neighbors say.

REV. S: Well, we have the cure for that. (To the villager): Later when our luggage arrives we will give you some medicine and tell you what else to do. The medicine will cost you two cents.

SICK VILLAGER: Bahoot Salaam. (Bows deeply in gratitude.)

(Another villager approaches to have his pulse felt. Missionary takes his wrist without really looking at the man. Then looks into the man's face and jumps back quite startled.)

REV. S: I'll say this man has something wrong with him. Look at his face. It's full of pox. He has the smallpox. (To the smallpox man): Don't you know you ought not be walking around in the village? You ought to be in a house all by yourself. Other people will catch it from you. (To the crowd gathered about): Don't you know that it's very dangerous to be near this man?

CROWD: There is no danger.

REV. P: What, no danger? How many people in this man's house have the same sickness?

1st VILLAGER: His wife and two of his children and his brother.

REV. P: And how many of his neighbors have it?

1st VILLAGER: Maybe ten people, maybe fifteen.

REV. S: And then you say there is no danger? One catches it from the other.

CROWD: There is no danger. It's only smallpox.

REV. S. (rolls up his sleeve and looks at his arm): I am glad I have my vaccination.

REV. P: So am I.

(Meanwhile Daniel and Massihdas, the two Indian workers, draw up and a man carrying a cower in which there is a portable phonograph in one side and a box containing pamphlets and Bibles in the other. As they approach the people gather about and look on in curiosity.)

REV. S: Do you people want to hear some music?

CROWD. (eagerly): Yes, yes.

REV. P: We will play some religious songs.

CROWD: That's just what we want.

REV. P: Then sit down. (They all sit down expectantly.)

(Phonograph is opened and some hymn is played like "In the Cross of Christ I Glory." The villagers listen very interestedly and can hardly contain themselves for curiosity. Now and then one will go close to the phonograph and try to look in to see who is in it or sticks his finger in the opening from which the sound comes. The entire record need not be played.)

A VILLAGER (just as the song stops): Missionary sahib, that was a very fine song, but I didn't understand all the words.

REV. S: That is just what I want to do, tell you the words of the song so you can all understand them and know what they mean.

CROWD: Bahoot Acha (meaning "very well").

REV. S. (standing on the rock): (The others are all squatted on the ground.) This song is a song of praise to a very great teacher. This teacher's name is Jesus. I will tell you about Him and what He did.

ANOTHER VILLAGER: But Missionary sahib, this teacher you are talking about is undoubtedly a great teacher, but he is the teacher for the English people. The great teachers for Hindu people are the Hindu teachers. (Most of those in the crowd nod and mutter in assent.)

REV. S: But Jesus is not an English teacher nor even an American. In England there have been many great teachers but none so great as Jesus, so the people of England accept Jesus as their greatest teacher. And in America, the country where I come from, we have had great teachers but none as great as Jesus, so we place Jesus before all our own teachers. And the same is true in Germany and France, and not only among the white people, but also the black. People of every country and every race have accepted Jesus.

3rd VILLAGER: But if Jesus is not an Englishman, then what country is He from?

REV. S: He is from a country that is nearer to India than to England or America and He lived when Englishmen and Americans were still savages.

2nd VILLAGER: But why do you take a foreign teacher for your teacher?

REV. S: Because He is greater than any of our teachers and we must have the best.

REV. P: Do you know that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest man in India and our leader, has said that Jesus has helped him more than any other man has helped him?

REV. S: Of course if you think Jesus can't teach you anything then I won't waste time by talking to you about Him. But if He has helped some people in every country in the world don't you think He can help the people in India also?

CROWD: You may tell us. We are listening.

3rd VILLAGER: Keep quiet all you people. The missionary sahib is going to tell us something about religion and a great teacher. We will listen.

REV. S: All right, then listen. Many years ago Jesus was born in the land of Palestine. His parents were of the Rajah's family but very poor. . . . (Meanwhile the curtain begins to drop and the missionary stops speaking just as soon as the curtain is down. Curtain remains down just a few moments to indicate the passage of time. Note should be made in the program that the drop of the curtain indicates the passing of half an hour so that the audience

understands. Curtain begins to rise again after a few moments and we find the same scene as before excepting the people are shifted around a little and Rev. Prakash is speaking. The two Christian workers are standing beside him and one of them is holding open a Sunday School picture roll showing some picture out of the Life of Christ. The missionary is seated on one of the rocks.)

REV. P: And now we have explained these pictures to you and my two brothers here and the missionary and I have all told you about our great teacher, Jesus, and the phonograph has also sung and told about Him. Do you want to ask any questions?

2nd VILLAGER: How long are you going to stay in our village?

REV. P: It is time to go now.

2nd VILLAGER: Why don't you stay with us for several days? Then we can hear more. After you are gone we will forget again the things that you have told us.

REV. P: We must go because we have many villages to visit. But I have arranged some help for you. These two men who are standing beside me live in Singansara, only five miles away. You often go to Singansara because of the bazaar that is held there every week. They will be glad to tell you more.

DANIEL: And when we come to this village we will visit you. We visit all the villages around here regularly.

REV. P: And so you don't forget so soon, and so you can find out more than we can tell you in many hours we have brought some books along which you can buy very reasonably.

1st VILLAGER: If these books are about religion, don't you think they ought to be given away free?

REV. S. (rising: If I gave away many books what would happen? In a little while you'd find their torn pages scattered all over the village, wouldn't you? If I charge you for them then only those who really want them will buy them and those who would just tear them up won't buy them. Am I right?

CROWD: Teek hi. Teek hi. (Some yell, "You are right, you are right," which is the meaning of "teek hi.")

REV. P: See these books (holds them up). A book like that in the bazaar would cost you two cents but I am selling this to you for ½c because we are here not to make money like the men in the bazaar, but only to help you get knowledge of Jesus.

MASSIHIDAS: Who wants one? Who can read? (Pointing to one of the men) Can you read?

2nd VILLAGER: No, but my brother can.

3rd VILLAGER: Let's hear what the book is like.

DANIEL: (reads) John 3: 16.

CROWD: Sing it, sing it.

DANIEL: (begins to sing in a singsongy style the same passage he has read.)

1st VILLAGER: I will take one.

2nd VILLAGER: Give me one too.

(The two workers go among the people and sell some pamphlets. In the meantime the people have risen and have begun to disperse. Pretty soon no one but the missionary, Rev. Prakash and the two workers remain.) The phonograph and everything is gotten ready for departure. As the villagers disperse, some of them go off the stage reading their pamphlets.

REV. S: I see we sold quite a number of Bible portions. People are the same in India as in America. When they pay for their books they read them. Look at that man over there reading with half a dozen men sitting around listening. If we gave the books away they wouldn't read them.

REV. P: It's the same with medicine. If we gave away the medicine they wouldn't take the trouble to swallow it, but you don't catch them throwing it away when they have paid for it, even if it's only a trifle they have paid.

(Mohan, a boy, about eight years old, dressed in yellow, comes running across the stage.)

MASSIHDAS: Hey, Mohan, what are you doing in Bagauth today? You live in Singansara, five miles from here.

REV. S: How do you happen to know this boy?

MASSIHDAS: He attends the mission school in Singansara.

REV. S. (to Mohan): What grade are you in, Mohan?

MOHAN (standing by very bashfully): I am in the second grade.

REV. S: And why are you not in school today?

MOHAN: I have come here for my wedding.

REV. S: Your what?

MOHAN: My wedding.

REV. S: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! Quite right! I see you have on your yellow wedding robe. (To Rev. P.): I ought to have known that it was his wedding as soon as I saw the yellow robe, but you know, although I know it is quite customary for the boys to be married at this age I can't quite get used to it and it surprises me anew every time.

REV. P: Quite different from your country, isn't it?

REV. S: Quite so. Of course I know these boys are not really getting married, that their so-called wedding is only an engagement and that they won't really get married for some years to come, but it all seems so queer.

REV. S. (to Mohan): Well, Mohan, bring your bride here and let us see her.

MOHAN: I haven't seen her yet myself. But I'll see her before the wedding is over. I must run to where the other boys are. I am having lots of fun at my wedding.

2nd WORKER: Sahib, that's the boy Suleiman wanted to marry his daughter to. This boy's father gave Suleiman thirty rupees for his daughter but we told Suleiman if he married his daughter at such a young age we would have to put him out of the church.

REV. S: Then what happened?

1st WORKER: Oh, Mohan's relatives in another village heard that Mohan's father wanted to get a Christian girl for his son and threatened to put him out of caste if he did. So Mohan's father came and took back fifteen rupees from Suleiman and called it square.

REV. P: Our Christians don't drop their Hindu customs in a day, and it's a continuous fight to keep them straight.

REV. S: There are some customs that are all right and we don't want to break them off. There is no reason why Indians have to imitate us Europeans simply to be like us, but on the other hand, child marriage and child selling are hardly Christian nor even civilized.

REV. P. (smiling): Just the other day I had a good illustration of how different our Indian ideas are from your American, especially on marriage. One

of our lady missionaries had just gone by and I heard two women talking about her.

REV. S: What did they say about her?

REV. P: The one said, "That missionary Miss Sahib, comes to see me in my home every month. I enjoy her visits very much. She is a very fine woman, but she has an awful father." The second one asked what the father did that he was so cruel to her. Can you guess what the cruelty was?

REV. S: I give up. What did the cruel daddy do?

REV. P: He had not gotten a husband for the missionary Miss Sahib. I tell you that father's reputation is blasted in India for such cruel treatment. (Smiling) So you see the joke about weddings isn't all on the Indians.

REV. S: But let's get started. We have ten more miles to walk.

REV. P: No, let's eat first.

REV. S: No, let's walk another five miles first.

REV. P: I guess we'll have to toss a coin.

REV. S: All right. You climb up in this tree and throw down a coin and jump after it. If you land on your head we won't walk any farther, and if you land on your . . .

REV. P: Suppose we compromise. There is a nice pond about a mile on. Let's eat there.

REV. S: You win. Let's go. (To the workers): You come as soon as the luggage is ready. (They exit.) (The two workers have just started to follow when a villager runs up to them.)

1st VILLAGER: I would like to speak with you.

DANIEL: Willingly. What is it?

1st VILLAGER: When you became a Christian what did the Sahib give you?

MASSIHDAS: What do you mean?

1st VILLAGER: I have heard people say that when you become a Christian, the sahib will give you a team of oxen to plough your rice fields and will *give* you land, too.

DANIEL: When I became a Christian I received nothing but Christianity itself. My father chased me out of his house and I had nothing but trouble for some time after, but I am not sorry.

MASSIHDAS: Listen. When a sadhu goes on a pilgrimage will he not suffer all kinds of hardship for his religion's sake?

1st VILLAGER: Certainly.

MASSIHDAS: Don't you think a Christian will do as much or even more for his God?

1st VILLAGER (disappointedly): Then the sahib will not give me anything for becoming a Christian?

BOTH WORKERS: Hardly.

(Toward the end of this dialogue a young man has drawn near and listens attentively. The two workers did not see him but as the villager leaves they look up and recognize him with somewhat of a start.)

DANIEL: Sitaram. It is you?

SITARAM: Yes, it is I.

MASSIHDAS: But you look downcast and fallen.

SITARAM: I have reason to be. My father has found out that I have been reading the Christian scriptures. He is very angry. He has given me three days to think over whether I will forsake the religion of my fathers and be

disinherited or give up reading my New Testament and remain his son. I must answer him today.

DANIEL (sympathetically): It is a heavy hour for thee, friend. I, too, have known this most dreadful of all hours. There is but One who can give all the strength you will need.

SITARAM: I have heard the missionary sahib has been here. Where is he! He will speak to my father.

MASSIHDAS: He has gone a short distance ahead. But we will call him. You remain here. (They exit.)

SITARAM (sitting upon a rock and burying his head in his hands.): Today I must give an answer. My father will not wait another day. I must either leave thee, my father, my mother, my sisters, my brothers, my home and country, or deny Thee, Christ, whom I have just found but can't deny. . . . (pause). I know what my answer must be, but I cannot give it, I cannot. I cannot leave thee, father, mother, I cannot . . . My dear wife, Sushila, how true and faithful you are, at least you will not forsake me.

(Enter Sitaram's father.) Walks up to Sitaram and puts his hand on his shoulder in a tender way. Sitaram does not notice until he is touched. Looks up in surprise. Is both glad and sorry to see his father.

FATHER: Come, son, you are still my son, are you not?

SITARAM: I very much wish to be.

FATHER (quickly): So it is well. I am glad to see you so sensible. Nothing I have will be too good for you . . .

SITARAM: But I cannot give up . . .

FATHER (angrily): What! Still so foolish? Think of what it will mean. What is a man without relatives? Think of the honor you have of the oldest son of the owner of many villages. Your place is awaiting you in the village council, you shall inherit your family name. Can the missionary sahib give you more than this? What will the missionary sahib give you?

SITARAM: He gives nothing to people for becoming Christians.

FATHER (laughing derisively): And you will go with him to get nothing? Surely you couldn't be that great a fool.

SITARAM: I do not want to leave you, but . . .

FATHER: Say not "but" to me. We have the religion of our fathers and who leaves that leaves all. Give up this foolishness or leave my house and inheritance forever. . . . Who leaves my religion is dead to me. He is worse than dead. . . . Come now, give me your answer. I must know now. Come into thy father's house and continue his name and be his life and pride. . . . (pause) Are you coming?

SITARAM: If you mean that . . .

FATHER: Speak to me not like that. Will you renounce this Christian religion forever?

SITARAM: (Does not answer.)

FATHER: Speak. I command thee to answer.

SITARAM: Father, I cannot deny.

FATHER: Then my eldest son is dead. You are not my son but the son of a pig. (Aloud so that all may hear): Come, come, people of the village and be my witnesses. You shall see and everyone shall know that he who was my son is an outcaste.

(The villagers come running and talk excitedly.)

FATHER: Know all ye people that I renounce and cast off my eldest son forever. Never shall he darken my doorway again. (He walks up to Sitaram

and roughly jerks off the bracelets and earrings and necklace and tosses them to a servant to carry along. He also pulls off the boy's coat and leaves the stage crying, "He is dead, he is dead." The crowd pauses for a moment, looking at Sitaram, but keeping away from him. Someone calls out, "He is an outcaste." The crowd takes up the refrain yelling the same as it rushes off the stage. Several stones and clods of earth are thrown at Sitaram as the crowd disappears. Sitaram is left alone on the stage.)

SITARAM: An outcaste. An outcaste. I am indeed an outcaste. They have all cast me out. Where shall I go? . . . (Then suddenly looks hopeful.) But no, I am not quite altogether an outcaste. There is one who has not cast me out. My dear wife. Together we shall go . . . We shall go . . . We shall go . . . I don't know where we shall go, but we shall go together. I will say farewell to my mother and then I and my wife shall go. (Exit.)

(Stage remains empty for a moment or two. Then enter missionary, Prakash and two workers.)

REV. S: Where is this young man you were speaking of?

DANIEL: He was here when we left. He must have gone. Come we will go to find him. (Daniel and Massihdas exit.)

REV. S: Do you know this Sitaram, Prakash?

REV. P: I have seen him in Raigarh. He attends High school there and is about the best liked and brightest fellow in the school. He told me once that he had bought a New Testament and was reading it, but I had no idea it was a very serious case. I wonder even now how much there is to it.

REV. S: His father is quite wealthy I understand.

REV. P: Yes, he is the owner of several villages hereabout and is a very strict Hindu. He feeds Brahams and Sadhus by the score. He would take it pretty hard if his son would show a leaning toward Christianity.

(Enter both workers excitedly.)

DANIEL: Sahib, we have heard that Sitaram has already been disinherited. His father has put him out.

MASSIHDAS: We found Sitaram just as he was knocking at his mother's door. His mother didn't open to him but called "Who is there?" He answered, "It is I, Sitaram, I have come to say farewell before I leave. His mother called through the door, "I have no son called Sitaram. He is dead. Go or I will call the curse of the gods down on you."

REV. S: His own mother!

DANIEL: Then we told Sitaram quickly to get his wife from his home and come here to meet us. He will soon be here.

REV. P: Here he comes now. Poor boy. He must feel terrible. See how he looks.

REV. S. (gives Sitaram his hand): We have heard everything. We are sorry. Come, we better leave immediately before there is more uproar in the village. But where is your wife?

(In the meantime Sitaram has sunk down on the rock and looks utter helplessness and despair. He speaks between sobs and with difficulty.)

SITARAM: She also has cast me out. She has left me and run off to her father's house so that I cannot follow her.

REV. S: Your cup is certainly full. Do you wish to come with us or would you not rather stay here and make up again with your father? It is not yet too late.

SITARAM: It is too late. What I have seen I have seen, and what I have heard I have heard. How can I go back to Hinduism when only Jesus seems

true to me? Let me go with you. I have never worked in my life, but I shall learn to plow and weed the rice fields or do a low-caste's work, if necessary.

(A sound of wailing and lamentation is heard. It steadily grows nearer.)

REV. P: A funeral procession is coming this way on the way to the burning ghats. It's rather late in the day for a funeral.

(The funeral procession passes across the stage. Two men carry what appears to be a corpse covered with a dirty sheet on a stretcher. The rest of the villagers follow wailing and moaning. Among the mourners Sitaram's father is to be seen quite prominently. The procession passes over the stage and the wailing dies down in the distance.)

SITARAM: Missionary sahib, do you know whose funeral this is?

REV. S: No, I do not.

SITARAM: It is *my* funeral.

REV. S. (puzzled): I don't understand. Surely you are joking.

SITARAM: No, I am not joking. There was no real corpse on that stretcher. It is a dummy.

REV. S: Why that?

SITARAM: That dummy is supposed to be myself. Did you not see my father in the funeral procession? He is holding funeral rites for me because he would far rather see that I be dead and burned in the burning ghat. He prefers me a charred corpse.

(Rev. P. makes signal to two workers and missionary to begin to leave. They walk towards the opposite end of the stage from that left by the funeral procession. Sitaram walks with them. The missionary turns around again to look after the funeral party. He is still near the center of the stage.)

SITARAM (sees missionary gazing back. Walks back to join him and asks missionary): Didn't everybody think Jesus dead and bury Him?

REV. S: They did.

SITARAM: And then what happened?

REV. S: He arose again from the dead.

SITARAM: I have only begun to live. Since I have found Christ I shall be as one risen from the dead.

CURTAIN

* * * *

ACT II

Scene: Living room of the missionary. Curtain opens with some twenty or thirty small children squatted in the sitting room, listening to a stirring march on the phonograph. Just the last few bars need to be played. There is an oil lamp on one of the tables.

MRS. S: Well, children, have you heard enough?

CHIDREN: Oh, Mammajee, we could listen much longer.

A CHILD: Play ten more pieces.

MRS. S: But I have played over an hour now and it is time for you to go back to the boarding house and go to sleep.

GIRLS: Can we see the baby before we go?

MRS. S: I'll see if he is awake. (Goes and gets baby.) Here he is. (The girls all crowd up to see the baby. Boys show some interest but not the same as the girls. Girls sit down again. Then one girl steps forward with a flower necklace she has been hiding and puts it over the baby's neck. Another girl steps forward and places a flower necklace over Mrs. S's head. The girls seem quite pleased with themselves.

MRS. S: Thank you, girls. And baby would thank you too, but he's a boy and can't talk much.

A GIRL: Mammajee, my head itches again.

MRS. S: Come here. (Looks at her head.) No wonder it itches. Put plenty of coal-oil on your heads tomorrow. But now run on back to the board-house. Good night.

(Boys and girls pass out saying, "Salaam" and "thank you for the music" and "Good night, baby." Mrs. S. puts baby to bed. While she is out, Rev. S. comes in, clad in boots and raincoat and carrying lantern; servant enters and takes lantern, boots and raincoat. (Exits.) Rev. S. puts on bedroom slippers and sits down picking up a magazine from the library table as he does so. Lights pipe and proceeds to read.)

MRS. S. (as she enters): So you got back all right.

REV. S: Oh! I just took a little walk to get a little exercise. You have to get some exercise even if it is raining. Rain! Rain! Rain! The creek is so high it is a regular rushing river. My teachers from Sarampur school couldn't get in to get their salaries today.

MRS. S: It certainly must be high if they didn't get here on pay day.

REV. S. (jumping up and putting his hand down his back): There is another bug down my back. That's all I'm doing tonight—pulling bugs out of my clothes. I feel real creepy.

MRS. S: The sand flies are biting my ankles very badly. I am going to get my standard protector. (She gets up and gets a pillow case and puts her feet in it.) Now they can't bite my ankles.

REV. S: Not much luck in reading at night in the rainy season. Too many bugs around the lamp and too warm near a lamp.

MRS. S: It is certainly buggy and warm today. I've been perspiring all day. How's your prickly heat?

REV. S: It's quite strong and healthy, thank you. (Puts down magazine.) Guess I'll quit reading anyway. Tired of reading. It's been raining all day and I've been working at my desk or reading since morning. Nothing else to do.

MRS. S: Did you see anything interesting in the magazine?

REV. S: Only that advertisement that always says, "The skin you love to touch." The fellow who wrote that was never in India in the rainy season.

MRS. S: What shall we do to pass away the evening?

REV. S: Play dominoes.

MRS. S: Oh, we've played dominoes so often we are sick of it. Didn't we say we weren't going to play any more? Let's write letters.

REV. S: I'm tired of writing, I did much of it today. I'd play the phonograph but we've played the same records almost every day for five years and the thrill of them is slightly worn off.

MRS. S: I think we will do what we have had to do to amuse ourselves the last forty-four nights.

REV. S: What is that?

MRS. S: Sit and admire each other. I think we will write to the editor of the society column that Mr. and Mrs. Sticks spent another quiet evening at home.

REV. S: Let's have some refreshments. I think I'll treat the company to a glass of nice lukewarm water. Rises and walks to the door, then suddenly jumps back and runs to the corner where he grabs a cane and strikes the floor near the door where he jumped back.)

MRS. S. (surprised): What has gotten into you all of a sudden?

REV. S: Oh, I thought it was about time to slam one of our guests. There is a snake on the floor.

MRS. S: A dangerous one?

REV. S: It's quite harmless now. Dead men tell no tales, and dead snakes wag no tails nor bite monkeys either. (Picks up snake by tail and throws it out.)

MRS. S: That is such a little snake, barely a foot long. Could that really harm you?

REV. S: It's a young one and looks no worse than an earth worm. If it should bite you, it wouldn't hurt you after the first hour. I really think you would forget all about it by that time. You would be so interested in your new heavenly home you would have forgotten all about this "vale of tears" here below. But all you have to do is watch where you step at night and there is no danger.

MRS. S: Did you read that letter Mr. Albrecht wrote us?

REV. S: By the way, I don't think I have seen today's mail.

MRS. S: It's on the library table, probably under one of those magazines.

REV. S. (picking up mail and beginning to read. Snickers to himself once in a while.): This is rich. Some of these learned students of English here in India can certainly write original letters. Listen to this (he reads):

"Honored and Respectful Sir:

I, having heard on best authority, that your headmaster is failing to be such a master like you so strongly desire, I take pleasure in informing you that my humble and respected self is just such a man like you so strongly desire. I am a No. 1, first-class headmaster and speak English perfectly. Since I pass seventeen in class of twenty-five scholars only, I am what your strong desire is. I will receive from you rupees fifty each month only and if your self be pleased you will furnish me soap for washing and an umbrella also. I have had adventurous life as a Boy Scout and will be very useful to you. Please send cart for my luggage and my children. If you accept me I will continue to pray for your long life and many children. My children will also thank you."

MRS. S: He's certainly accommodating.

REV. S: Here is a letter from Rebecca, the orphan, whom the Mission sent to Normal school and who is now teaching in Bistrampur (reads):

"Dear Guarient:

When I hear from you with letter that Rebecca go to Bistrampur to teach it was a great shock to hear. Because I speak so well English in Raipur my teaching ought to be well. Besides, Raipur I want to go because there more educationer peoples will be met. I will never disobedient you. You are my mother and father. Salaams to Mammajee. . . . Rebecca." (Enter Dayalu, a servant.)

DAYALU: There are two women here, an older one and a young one, and they say the have come a long distance to speak to the missionary sahib. They are quite wet, sir.

MRS. S: Are they Christian women?

DAYALU: No, memsahib, they are both Hindu.

MRS. S: Then perhaps I had better go to see them first. You know how shy Hindu women are and they must be quite drenched and in need to come in this rain.

REV. S: That is a good idea. A man doesn't even have to say "boo" to a Hindu woman to frighten her out of her wits. (Exit Mrs. S., puts pillow slip on chair.)

REV. S. (starts to read again, but after a moment examines lamp): So many bugs have fallen into this lamp that it smokes all the time. Who can read with such a lamp? I smell toasted bugs.

(Enter Dayalu.)

DAYALU: Sahib, I see a lantern approaching. I think it is Rev. Prakash coming. He probably got off the evening train.

REV. S: If it is, show him right in.

(Dayalu exits and returns with Rev. Prakash. Takes his rain coat and exits. Rev. P. and Rev. S. greet and shake hands.)

REV. S: Well, this is good. In the three years I've been in this lonesome old station, it's the first time we ever had a surprise visitor.

REV. P (smiling): Well, lots of things are happening in Raigarh these days, so I thought I'd drop in so we could talk them over.

REV. S: Blessed be the occasion that brought us a surprise visitor. Sit down and I'll see that you get an opportunity to indulge in your incurable vice. (Calls) Dayalu. (Dayalu enters.) You had better make some tea for Rev. Prakash.

DAYALU: I started making it as soon as I saw him coming.

REV. S: See how they all know your vice? I wonder if there isn't a cure for tea fiends. I suppose your going to England for two years had something to do with making you such an addict.

REV. P: You let me and my tea alone. It is no worse a vice than your eating peanuts.

(Enter Mrs. S. She and Prakash greet each other.)

REV. S: Have you hung your two new lady friends on the line to dry?

MRS. S: Those two women walked twenty miles through the rain and mud today. The younger one seems to be hunting for her husband who has become a Christian. Her parents took her away from him when he became a Christian and she has been attempting to escape ever since. The queer thing is that the one who helped her escape and came with her is not her husband, but her mother-in-law. They did not want to give me their names and as they are quite tired, I did not press them. I saw to it that they are getting dry clothing and something to eat.

REV. S: It was best not to press them for their names. Let them tell of themselves.

(Enter Dayalu with tray containing tea and cookies. Sets small table before the group and they draw up to it.)

REV. P: I see you succeeded in training your servant not to give you tea, but lemonade.

REV. S: Yes, at last. But what's all that going on in Raigarh that you came to tell me about?

REV. P: You see it is this way. Ever since Sitaram became a Christian the High school authorities are watching the boys like hawks so no more of them might come under Christian influence. The other day they caught a boy with a New Testament.

MRS. S: A terrible crime!

REV. P: They started a search of the boys' dormitory immediately and found a New Testament in the personal effects of 30 boys.

REV. S: Which goes to show that Christianity creeps into more corners than we dream of.

REV. P: When this became known there was a rumpus all over the city. We thought it might go hard with us Christians. Finally the matter came before the Rajah himself.

MRS. S: What did he say?

REV. P: He handed down the decision that anyone can read whatever he pleases.

REV. S: Good for him. He seems to have learned a few progressive ideas at Rajkumar College.

(Enter Dayalu and removes tray and table.)

MRS. S: What is Sitaram doing?

Rev. P: He's a fine fellow and certainly a firm Christian. He goes out touring with me and is one of the best helpers I have.

MRS. S: Courageous fellow all right. It was terrible blow to be cast out of his father's house. In India family connections are more important than in America. In America a man will leave his home and go to another town or city to seek his fortune and feel at home in his new surroundings after a while. But in India, all the social customs and traditions, in fact, a man or woman's place in life is worked out through his family connection. He invariably returns to his home town be it only two or three mud huts. It must be a great hardship for Sitaram.

REV. P: I have heard rumors that his wife didn't really run away from him, but was kidnapped, and is seeking a chance to escape. I have also heard that his mother has changed in her attitude toward him. But as these are only rumors, I didn't tell the poor fellow because I didn't want him to attach too much hope to them. It probably is not true.

MRS. S: Wouldn't it be fine if it were true? When his wife deserted him, I thought it would be the last straw, but he rallied nobly. I wonder if . . . (Brightens up perceptibly all of a sudden.) Say, I've an idea . . . I'm going to try an experiment. I'll be back in a few minutes. (Exits hurriedly.)

REV. S: What's gotten into her? She must have gotten a sudden inspiration from somewhere.

REV. P. (laughing): Better let her alone. She'll show up with something that will put her ahead of us by a few leaps and bounds.

REV. S: Cholera is raging in this district again. Quite a few people are dying daily. Certainly hope we don't get it in the boarding house.

REV. P: More people could be saved if they only came for help in time. But they are learning little by little. I sold quite a bit of cholera mixture the last month.

MRS. S. (returns looking mysterious and quite happy and out of breath): Rev. Prakash, did you say Sitaram came with you? Will you please call him? I wish to speak with him.

REV. P. (calls Dayalu and gives order): Tell Sitaram to come here.

MRS. S: Tell him to wait for us in the office.

(Dayalu exits.)

REV. S: What in the world do you want with Sitaram this time of the night? Prakash, I think the wife must have something up her sleeve. What do you think?

MRS. S: I haven't much of a sleeve. I just got this dress from America.

REV. S: Just the same, there is something in the air.

(Mrs. S. looks around in the air in mock search.)

(In the next room shuffling is heard and then Sitaram's voice as he cries out in surprise and joy, "Sushila" and "Mother.")

REV. S: What is going on in the next room? Who is in there?

MRS. S. (joyfully): Oh, it is they, and they have found each other. Oh, you two stupid men. Can't you put two and two together? You are so slow.

REV. S and REV. P: What do you mean?

MRS. S: Can't you even now catch on? Those two women that came in tonight are Sitaram's wife and mother. I brought them into your study and then I had Sitaram called into the study. They have found each other.

REV. S: Well, who would have thought that.

REV. P: Only a bright woman, like your wife. Men are too stupid to think that far.

(Enter Sitaram, attempting to drag in his wife and mother. He is beside himself with joy. He does not succeed in bringing them forward as these Hindu women become very shy in the presence of men, and they hold back as soon as they see Rev. S. and Rev. P.)

SITARAM: Sahibjee, look what I have found (pointing to them). My wife and my mother.

REV. S. and REV. P. (shaking hands with Sitaram): Sitaram, we are certainly happy for your sake. This is a wonderful day for all of us. (All around congratulations.)

MRS. S. (taking the wife and mother by the arm and starting out): Come Sitaram, we must go out and see the rest of the Christians. I know they all want to hear the good news and rejoice with you. (Exit all but Rev. S. and Rev. P.)

REV. P: I said your Memsahib would get ahead of us.

REV. S: Now how in all the world did she guess that? Prakash, what do you say, aren't women queer?

CURTAIN

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EPILOGUE

Same scene as Act II. Several days later. There are present Rev. S., Mrs. S., Sitaram, his wife and mother. Rev. and Mrs. S. are seated and the others are standing.

REV. S. (rising and going to the mother): Are you really going home so soon?

MOTHER: I must be on my way.

MRS. S: Your son and daughter have both become Christians. Have you perhaps not been thinking of it?

MOTHER: Memsahib, my second son, Sitaram's brother, has told me he will welcome back Sitaram. Go speak with him. I think perhaps he will become a Christian.

MRS. S: But you have not answered for yourself.

MOTHER (speaking slowly and deliberately): Memsahib, I am a wife. There is one thing that we Hindu women never forget—to honor our husbands. Did my husband become a Christian I would be glad. But he is not a Christian and will never become one. I am his wife. Where he goes, I will go, and where he remains, I will remain. As long as he worships idols, I, too, will worship idols. I leave you my son and daughter-in-law, but I must go. Farewell.

(She begins to shake hands with Rev. and Mrs. S. and embrace the other two. Meanwhile the curtain is descending.)

CURTAIN